DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 232 425 EC 160 034

AUTHOR	Anderson, Daniel D.
TITLE	Assessment and Improvement of Related Services: "The Balancing Act."
PUB DATE	Oct 82
NOTE	12p.; Paper presented at the Joint Meeting of Evaluation Network and Evaluation Research Society (Baltimore, MD, October 28-30, 1982).
PUB TYPE	Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Ancillary School Services; Elementary Secondary Education; Models; *Multiple Disabilities; *Planning; Program Design; *Program Development; *Resource Allocation; Resources; *Severe Disabilities; Staff Utilization
IDENTIFIERS	Hawaii; *Model T Project

ABSTRACT

Elements of effective planning in special education are considered, and a Hawaii project, Model T, is described. The project focuses on the process of making and evaluating resource decisions, such as decisions about the kind and frequency of related services staff time versus instructors' time. Microeconomic concepts such as diminishing returns and input substitution are used in decision making, particularly for severely/multiply impaired students requiring greater staff time and more related services. Early findings of the Model T project suggest that allowing individuals other than specialists, (i.e., parents, teachers, and aides), to carry out some planned related services activities without removing the student from the classroom will be more efficient and effective. A formula is described which depicts the possible resource combinations or substitutions to meet related service needs. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED232425

ABSTRACT

Assessment and Improvement of Related Services
"The Balancing Act"

Planning is a process of balancing needs and resources. In order to effectively perform the planning act (i.e., making decisions), the planner should have relevant information on needs and resources. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the use of selected microeconomic concepts in the evaluation of resource utilization so that the special education decision maker will have more accurate information upon which to make planning decisions.

Federal legislation, such as Public Law 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, mandated that special education planners focus their planning and evaluation efforts on individual child needs (i.e., accomplishing individual objectives). Yet the planning for the delivery of special education related services by occupational, physical, and speech therapists is more often based on the availability of resources.

Little accurate information is available regarding the efficient utilization of related services resources. Selected microeconomic concepts such as resource substitution may prove to be an important tool in the evaluation of resource utilization.

At a time when resources are becoming more limited, the evaluation of resource utilization becomes increasingly important in service delivery decision making. It is hoped that the Hawaii project will assist the special education related service decision maker by providing more accurate and useful information on resource utilization.

Paper Submitted to:

Evaluation 82
The 1982 Joint Meeting of Evaluation Network
and Evaluation Research Society
October 28-30, 1982
Baltimore, Maryland

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Daniel D. Anderson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Submitted by:

Daniel D. Anderson
Pacific Basin Consortium
1776 University Avenue
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

FL016034

EC

Planning is a process of balancing needs and resources. In order to effectively perform the planning act (i.e., making decisions), the planner should have relevant information on needs and resources. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the use of selected microeconomic concepts in the evaluation of resource utilization so that the special education decision maker* will have more accurate information upon which to make planning decisions. The term "resources," as used in this paper, is human and temporal.

We know that sound planning and decision making should be based on the: assessment of need; development of proposed objectives (outputs) to meet needs; identification and utilization of resources (inputs) for objective accomplishment; and evaluation of resources, efforts, and results. Experience has taught us that when our plans are out of balance we are neither effective in accomplishing proposed objectives nor do we make the kind of decisions that utilize our resources efficiently.

Federal legislation, such as Public Law 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, mandated that special education planners focus their planning and evaluation efforts on individual child needs (i.e., accomplishing individual objectives). Yet the planning for the delivery of special education related services by occupational, physical, and speech therapists is more often based on the availability

*A special education decision maker is any person responsible for planning and/or delivery services to handicapped children (e.g., teachers, therapists, administrators).

of the therapist and the therapist's schedule.

Presently, planning for special education related service delivery is out of balance. Needs are recognized and documented but, frequently, related service decision making is based on the availability of resources and not on the needs of the children to be served. Evidence of this unbalanced or resource-oriented planning may be found in the way related service personnel are assigned "case loads." For example, a standard formula for determining case load is to divide the number of students requiring services by the number of service providers. Whatever the variables, the answer always seems to be the same--the student receives service two times per week, 20 minutes a session. This standard formula for determining the distribution of resources may be appropriate in meeting the needs of some students but certainly would not be appropriate for all children with wide ranging needs (see Figure 1).

If planning were more balanced, one would expect greater variations in the scheduling of resources and the kind of service necessary to meet individual needs. If planning is to be individualized and balanced, the process we use to make decisions about resource distribution (e.g., the scheduling of the related service provider) must change.

A Hawaii project, titled Model T**, is now being implemented and proposes to change the way planning decisions are made regarding

---

**Young, J., & Anderson, D. Model T: The therapist's schedule versus the therapy schedule. Paper presented at the meeting of The Association for the Severely Handicapped, New York, October 1981.

FIGURE 1

THERAPY FORMULA

X=MR, LD, HI, VI, SMH, SED, SLD

#X÷S÷Tt÷Ts=2 xWEEK, 20 min each

S=schools

Tt=therapist's time

Ts=therapist's schedule

the use of special education related service resources in meeting the educational needs of handicapped children. A particular focus of the Hawaii project is the process of making and evaluating resource decisions--i.e., decisions regarding the frequency, kind of service, and length of time which related service specialists (occupational, physical, and speech therapists) spend carrying out related service activities for the severely handicapped student as compared to the time which generalists (teachers, aides, others) spend carrying out these activities.

For example, a severely physically handicapped child may have been assessed and described as having specific motor development needs related to educational goals. Those goals are, in turn, divided into short-term objectives. Activities necessary for objective accomplishment are proposed and potential resources identified to carry out those activities. Decisions regarding the use of resources should be based on needs (proposed objectives) and resources. However, at this decision point, the individualized child-centered planning process often breaks down. Frequently, the scheduling of the related service provider's time for service delivery is locked into the traditional pattern of "all children are served two times a week, 20 minutes per session" no matter what the needs of the individual might be. Resource distribution (e.g., therapist time) has been pre-determined.

As a result of Public Law 94-142, school systems began providing more related services to more severely handicapped children. Hawaii, for example, initially designed programs for the severely-multi handicapped (SMH) child which included related service providers

spending half their time in each SMH classroom. An evaluation of that model indicated that "more was not always better." Although individual children differed, after a certain point of accomplishment, increasing the amount of time that the related service provider spent in the (SMH) classroom did not always result in greater objective accomplishment. Evidence suggested that there was a "point of diminishing returns." As one resource (the time of the specialist) was increased and other resources remained the same, the progress that the SMH child made toward objective accomplishment would, after some point, plateau and begin to diminish (see Figure 2).

On the other hand, a combination of resources (or partial "input substitution" of one resource for another) seemed more effective in objective accomplishment and less likely to result in a plateau of accomplishment or "diminishing returns." For example, a combination of related service specialist (carrying out evaluation service planning) and generalist (others carrying out planned related service activities) was more effective in objective accomplishment than increasing the specialist's time alone (see Figure 3).

The Hawaii project (Model T) planners believed that selected microeconomic concepts such as "diminishing returns" and "input substitution" might provide direction for the evaluation of resource utilization and assist educational decision makers in planning. Their interest led to the design of a system to assess the process of planning related services. There was evidence that some students had related service needs that were unmet by traditional planning (e.g., standard case load). Other students were not able to meet proposed objectives

by simply increasing the availability of one resource, but did respond when resources were substituted or combined. These observations suggest that any effort to improve the effectiveness of related services for the severely handicapped must include a process of evaluating the utilization of resources.

For the prupose of project simplification, related service resources were identified as being specialists or generalists without regard to the specific area (e.g., occupational or speech therapy). The "specialists" were described as being able to play two roles: specialists (i.e., having specialized knowledge and skills such as assessment and evaluation in a given area) and generalist (i.e., being able to carry out proposed related service activities such as motor development or language activities). The "generalists," on the other hand, were able to play only that one role--i.e., carrying out related service activities (see Figure 4).

One important project assumption was that both related service provider roles are necessary to accomplish special education related service objectives. That is, the specialist role is necessary for child assessment, service planning and evaluation; and the generalist role is necessary for carrying out planned service activities (e.g., skill development repetitions). The evaluation question is: Who most efficiently and effectively plays the generalist role?

The traditional model for providing related services utilizes a specialist to "pull" a student out of class and provide related services playing both roles (i.e., specialist and generalist). Evidence indicates that for students who are severely handicapped, slow to

change, and passive in the "educational" relationship, the traditional "pull out" model is ineffective, inefficient, and costly for the system as well as the student. For example, the student being pulled out of class for one related service activity may suffer a lost opportunity for the accomplishment of other educational objectives. The early results of the Hawaii Model T project suggest that a substitution of generalist resources (others carrying out the generalist role) will result in more efficient and effective objective accomplishment. That is to say, others--teachers, classroom aides, parents, etc.--can carry out planned related service activities for some handicapped students on a more efficient basis without removing the student from the classroom environment, thus reducing the cost (in educational opportunity) to the child.

Figure 5 provides the planner-decision maker with information as to the possible resource combinations or substitutions that may be used to meet the special education related service needs of a child. The accomplishment of a special education related service objective must involve a related service specialist for the purpose of evaluation and planning. That resource may be represented by the distance from O to S in Figure 5. Traditionally, related services were carried out exclusively by the specialist. Students were often "pulled out" of class for "therapy." Point A represents that point on the curve of possibilities where the specialist has total related service responsibility. The distance OA includes not only the role that the specialist alone must play--Os (e.g., evaluation)--but also includes the generalist role of carrying out all related service activities.

Problems associated with the traditional method of providing related services have been briefly discussed. For example, the use of specialists to carry out repetitive skill building activities (which can and must be carried out by others for generalization of learning to occur) is an inefficient use of specialized resources. Removing students from the classroom environment can result in lost opportunities for student classroom learning, as well as minimize communication between specialist and generalist.

Point B on the possibility curve (Figure 5) suggests that generalists (teachers, parents, aides) can be utilized (substituted) with maximum efficiency and effectiveness for objective accomplishment. Where Os represents the required role of specialist, Oi resources from generalists have been substituted for SA resources from the specialists. The advantages for such a substitution are clear. For example, it would be expected that the perceived need for more specialists would be reduced as recommended service activities would be carried out more frequently and in the context of appropriate learning environments by generalists. There are, however, disadvantages and decision makers must assess the "trade offs" of substituting generalists for specialists. For example, generalists may not, at first, be as adept at carrying out specific activities in a group situation and will likely require initial assistance from the specialist in order to carry out the proposed activities. The implications are that a mix of resources that draw more heavily on generalists will involve a role change for the specialist. The specialist will need to develop the consultation skills necessary to "fit" service activities into the students' overall educational curriculum.

Points C and D in Figure 5 represent other combinations of specialist-generalist mix that could be utilized to meet individual student needs. Point C, for example, suggests greater specialist involvement (Oe). Such a combination of resources may be most effective in meeting the needs of a student whose progress toward objective accomplishment is erratic. Thus, the specialist may be needed to play a more active evaluative and planning role. On the other hand, Point D may represent the best mix of resources for a student whose needs have been assessed, objectives determined, and progress toward objective accomplishment is steady. At Point D, generalists are able to play an active role carrying out proposed related service activities in conjunction with the ongoing involvement of the specialist.

This concept of resource substitution is presently being implemented in Hawaii. The initial reactions of decision makers has been positive. Administrators, as well as teachers and related service providers, report that for the first time they have some structure and rationale for making decisions regarding resource utilization. Resource utilization is now being more effectively evaluated and that evaluation information is being utilized in the planning of related services.

Although the initial reaction to the Hawaii project has been positive, much work remains and it is too early to assess the full impact of the project. However, at a time when resources are becoming more limited, the evaluation of resource utilization becomes increasingly important in service delivery decision making. It is hoped that the

Hawaii project will assist the special education related service decision maker by providing more accurate and useful information on resource utilization.

Note: Model T is a:

> three-dimensional model used to describe key characteristics of a child for whom related service planning decisions are to be made . . . . Model T provides a framework for making therapy decisions that are more child-centered and needs-oriented . . . . When Model T is used as an aid in planning therapy schedule decisions are more likely to be based on the needs of the child and less likely to be based on the limitation of available resources . . . . The model helps provide the decision maker with a rationale for his/her decision and information to more clearly communicate with others involved in service delivery. (Young & Anderson, 1981)